TITLE: WORK AT IT!

TEXT: Gen. 2:21-24, 3:12; Ephe. 5:22-28

INTRODUCTION: This week, we are in-between Mother’s Day and Father’s day. Mother’s Day was a couple weeks ago and Father’s Day is about 4 weeks off, so this morning I want to talk about something in-between those two subjects. Something that actually will contribute greatly to what kind of mom or dad we will be. This morning I want to talk about the Marriage relationship.

*Agatha Christie*

*An archaeologist is the best husband any woman can have—the older she gets, the more interested he is in her.*

*Benjamin Franklin*

*Keep your eyes open before marriage; half shut afterwards.*

*James Wharton*

*The difference between courtship and marriage is the difference between the pictures in the seed catalog and what comes up.*

French Proverb

*A deaf husband and a blind wife are always a happy couple.*

Ann Landers

*A successful marriage is not a gift; it is an achievement.*

An elderly man lay in a hospital with his wife of 55 years sitting at his bedside. “Is that you, Ethel, at my side again?” he whispered.

“Yes, dear,” she answered.

He softly said to her, “Remember years ago when I was in the Veteran’s Hospital? You were with me then. You were with me when we lost everything in a fire. And Ethel, when we were poor—you were with me there, too.”

The man sighed and said, “I tell you, Ethel, you’re bad luck.”

The marriage relationship….

To a large degree, what kind of mom or dad we are will be a reflection of what kind of a husband or wife that we are.

The family unit is built on a multi-dimensional relationship.

The relationship that mom has with the kids, the relationship that dad has with the kids, the relationship that dad has with mom, and mom has with dad, the relationship the kids have with mom and dad, and mom and dad have with the kids, and the relationship that they, as a family, have with others outside of this immediate spear….

But the base of relationship that God intended that the family be built upon is the relationship between a husband and a wife…the marriage relationship….

Let’s go back to the beginning shortly after God had created man..

**Gene 2:21 (NIV) So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh.**

**22 Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.**

**23 The man said,**

**"This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called `woman,' for she was taken out of man."**

**24 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.**

In the creation account God created the heavens and the Earth and all that lies in them. He then created man and placed him in the middle of a beautiful lush garden to tend and care for it.. It wasn’t too long before God saw that it was not good for man to be alone…

God saw that man needed something that he didn’t yet have, so God caused man to fall into a deep sleep, took a rib from his side, and from it He created woman.

Adam was delighted! He was ecstatic when he first saw Eve!

**He said…** "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called `woman,' for she was taken out of man!"

And it is…

**24 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.**

What is the reason that God gives for a man to leave his father and mother?

To be united to his wife!

**01692 dabaq {daw-bak'}**

1) to cling, stick, stay close, cleave to, keep close, stick to, stick with, follow closely, join to,

**1b) to be joined together, to pursue closely**

**Example:** Think of being super-glued to someone!

A man and a woman being united so closely together, that in reality the two become as one flesh! The two think and act as a unit, united in purpose.

And it is upon this foundation that the family unit is to be built upon.

**For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two of them will become one flesh!**

The union of the husband and wife in marriage is to be the closest of all earthly relationships. The two of them shall become one flesh…..

Literally “One of a kind” Once separate now united in purpose and harmony…

A Pastor taking about the ceremony of lighting the Unity or wedding candle by the bride and groom explains the procedure ahead of time, I tell the couple they each take a small burning candle, representing their solitary life thus far, and together they light the large, middle, wedding or unity candle.

When they put their small candles back into holders, they can either extinguish them, or leave them burning to represent their unique personalities. During the wedding it is interesting to see whether they leave the individual candles aglow or put them out. At a recent wedding, the bride and groom put the individual candles back into their holders with the flames burning. Then the bride, an impish gleam in her eye, bent over and blew out her husband’s candle leaving hers lit. The congregation burst into laughter. When I told of the incident at a ministerial meeting, Father Tom Glen commented wryly, “During the marriage ceremony two become one—on the honeymoon they discover which one.

You don’t have to answer this question or raise your hand, but I would like to ask all of you who are married or have been married this question?

How many of you feel like your marriage hasn’t worked as well as it could have at times?

Over the years I have heard this statement as a pastor…

Pastor: I don’t feel like my marriage is working too well anymore.

If you feel like your marriage isn’t working then I want to give you some words of encouragement this morning..

No one else’s “marriage” is working either!

Because “marriage” (the institution itself) doesn’t work!

In every healthy marriage it is not the marriage that works it is the people within the marriage that do the work!

In Marriage it is the people who work, not the institutional relationship itself!

In every healthy marriage it is not the marriage that is working it is the husband and wife doing the work within the perimeters of their marriage covenant.

Relationships never work! People do!

It is the work of the people involved that determine the condition of the relationship.

If you see someone who you perceive to have a successful marriage, then you need to realize that it is not their “marriage” that worked, but that the two that make up that relationship have worked, probably worked very hard, to make their marriage a success!

It is interesting to me what happens in the few short passages of Scripture from Gen. 2:23 to Gen. 3:12….

In thirteen verses of Scripture Adam went from ecstasy to hitting rock bottom!

Gene 2:23 (NIV) The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh---WO-MAN! Thank You God---

To Adam saying in Gen. 3:12 after being caught in sin…

**God said to Adam: Adam, Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat from….**

Notice Adam’s response….

**Gene 3:12 (NIV) The man said, "The woman you put here with me--she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."**

Paraphrase… God this is all your fault! If you wouldn’t have given me this woman this never would have happened! You see, she caused me to do it!

Adam went from WO-MAN! To WOE-MAN almost immediately!!

However long it lasted Adam & Eve now found that the honeymoon was over! Now the real work would start!

The work of building a marriage relationship!

God has a lot to say to us as husbands and wives in Scripture.

Some of the most explicit teaching for husbands and wives is found in the book of Ephesians…..

**Ephe 5:22 (NIV) Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.**

23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.

**24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.**

**25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her**

26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,

**27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.**

**28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies.**

Every couple I agree to marry must go through pre-marital counseling.

This is one portion of Scripture that I always cover.

Often it is not a real popular one when we start talking about wives submitting and husbands sacrificially loving!

I have had more than one couple “stiffen up” a little when I read these portions of Scripture!

**Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.**

**23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church!**

**24. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.**

**25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her**!

How much did Christ love the Church? Just picture Jesus on the cross and you have your answer!

Which is the harder command here?

I am sure that would be determined by what perspective you are looking at it from…

I am sure most wives will say that the submission thing is the harder of the two, and that men will say the loving with Christ sacrificial love is the harder of the two..

The point is it doesn’t make any difference which one may be harder to do, or if they are in fact equally hard to do.

There are a couple things that need to be understood about these verses of Scripture.

# 1. This is speaking to Christians! Those who have accepted Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior of their life.

It is good advice to the non-believer but they are not bound to it.

This brings us to the 2nd point.

For the believer this is not a suggestion of God, but a command of God to Christian husbands and wives!

Wives submit to your own husbands!

Husbands love your wives just as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her!

These are individual commands to us as Christian husbands and Christian wives.

They are not commands that are dependent on the other person’s obedience to the command.

Let me explain…

A husband may say that if his wife was more submissive to his authority within the home than he would be more willing and able to love his wife with the sacrificial love of Christ.

And a woman may say if her husband would love her with the sacrificial love of Christ than she would be more willing to be submissive to him in the relationship.

Now there is practical truth in these statements.

A woman is going to be more apt to be submissive to a husband who is loving her with the sacrificial love of Christ, and a husband is going to be more apt to show Christ sacrificial love to his wife when she is submissive to him, respecting his authority within the home.

But Scripture doesn’t say, wives submit to your husbands as to the Lord “**if”** they are loving you with the sacrificial love of Christ.

Nor does it say, husbands love your wives with the sacrificial love of Christ “**if”** they are submissive to you as to the Lord!

You see, ones obedience to these commands is not to be dependent on the other person’s obedience.

Scripture says:

**Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.** (period)

**Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her**. (period)

Looking at this from the prospective of individual Christians, wanting to obey and please God, the command has to be taken first and foremost personally!

I will submit to my husband regardless of how he loves me, out of my love for Christ!

I will love my wife with Christ sacrificial love regardless of how submissive my wife may be to me, out of my love for Christ.

As in all of our relationship with the Lord, our obedience is not to be dependent upon someone else’s obedience!

We obey the Lord because of our relationship with Him!

This is something that we need to “work out” as individual believers within our marriage relationships.

And it will take the work of surrendering our wills to Gods will and allow the Holy Spirit to do this work within us

We often expect the other person in our marriage relationship to meet our deepest needs, so we place an impossible burden on them…or it is our own reluctance to face the truth about ourselves, preferring to believe that it is our spouse who has a problem.

Ephe. chapter 5 is the framework for a successful marriage, not a checklist for the performance of our spouse.

It is a place to find our own job description…

These instructions are given to weak, sinful people who need a savior and His transforming power!

Basketball player Mark Price once said:

“*Marriage isn't going to fulfill you. Only a relationship with Christ will. When you come to that realization, it can free you to really love your spouse”.*

In talking about Gods purpose for marriage, Margie Zacharias said:

*Marriage is meant to point people to God. The family is God’s laboratory where his grace and provision are put to the test.*

God has provided marriage and the family relationship as something for us to better understand the relationship that He desires to have with us.

Marriage and family are to mirror our relationship with God. Provide a place where we can practice and prepare for the relationship we will have with Him in eternity.

**Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.**

23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.

**25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her**

26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,

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**28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies.**

Christian husbands, are you working on your relationship with your Lord by working on your relationship with your wife?

Christian wives, are you working on your relationship with your Lord by working on your relationship with your Husband?

Marriage and family relationships here on earth, I believe, is the practice field to help us prepare for the heavenly relationship that God desires to have with us, a practical way that we can work at our submissiveness and sacrificial love for Christ.

A submissive wife will be more likely to be submissive in her relationship with the Lord.

A husband that loves his wife sacrificially will be more likely to love His Lord sacrificially. And visa-versa!

The purpose for marriage and family is twofold:

1. To bring about fulfillment and joy while we are here in this world---
2. And even more importantly, to prepare us for the relationship that God wants to have with us for eternity…

So, how are we doing on both counts?

Are we working at our submission and sacrificial love for one another in our family relationships to enhance our submission and sacrificial love in our relationship with Christ?

Prayer